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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION I

J.F. KENNEDY FEDERAL BUILDING, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02203-2211

June 30, 1992

Janice A. Davidian, Clerk
New Bedford City Council
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Ms. Davidian:

Your June 10, 1992, letter to Administrator William Reilly and the attached petition of the National Toxics Campaign, opposing the incineration of New Bedford Harbor sediments at the Sawyer Street location has been referred to me for a response. Mr. Reilly and I have discussed this situation extensively and he is very aware of the concerns of the New Bedford City Council and residents of the area.

The city council's greatest concern seems to be whether the incinerator emissions will have an adverse health effect on the residents of New Bedford. As has been explained at EPA's community meetings, EPA regulations require the contractor to demonstrate that the incinerator and its attached air pollution control devices do not emit unsafe levels of dioxins or toxic metals by conducting a trial burn. During the trial burn, the contractor is required to measure emission rates of metals, dioxins, furans, and particulates in order to prove that the estimated maximum additional carcinogenic risk is no more than 1 in 100,000. This level of risk is numerically equal to the risk of being killed by lightning. The actual incineration of the Hot Spot sediments may not begin until after the trial burn results are reviewed and approved.

During the course of the incineration, the operating conditions will be continuously monitored to ensure that they are in accordance with the conditions approved as a result of the trial burn. These continuous monitors are wired directly to the waste feed line and they will automatically shut off the feed if conditions are different from the conditions which have been proven to be safe during the trial burn.

The city council asks that some other remedial alternative be chosen as has been done in other communities when "the people living there strongly objected." EPA conducted an extensive review to identify treatment technologies that might be appropriate for the Hot Spot remediation as part of the 1990 Feasibility Study. This information was updated in the April 14, 1992, memorandum, "Review of Technologies as Alternatives to Incineration for Treating Hot Spot Sediment." Even the most recent information from other Superfund sites continues to



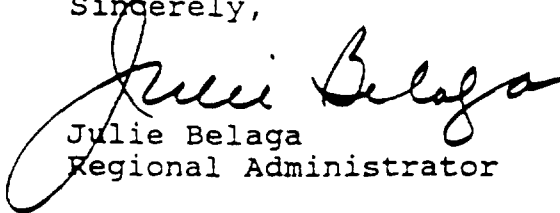
indicate that incineration is the safest and most effective method for treating the highly contaminated sediment in the Hot Spot.

In regard to the submitted petition, there have been numerous opportunities for the community to express its opinions about the issues surrounding the New Bedford Harbor contamination and cleanup. EPA conducted extensive community involvement activities before and during the final cleanup decision in April, 1990. EPA worked closely with a group of interested and concerned citizens who devoted extensive time and energy to understanding the complex and technical situation at the New Bedford Harbor site. In addition, more recent activities, such as the frequent public meetings and the evaluation of alternate technologies referenced above, indicate that EPA continues to respond to citizen concerns and to seek input into the cleanup process. It is my belief that through open two-way communication with interested citizens, many area residents will realize the enormous benefit the cleanup will bring to the New Bedford area.

EPA's paramount responsibility is the health and safety of citizens in New Bedford and surrounding communities. This is precisely why EPA must proceed with the cleanup plan for New Bedford Harbor. The goal of this or any other cleanup plan is to reduce the level of risk, thereby increasing safety at the site. Incineration is the least risky cleanup alternative for the treatment of Hot Spot sediment and will reduce the current risk posed by the site tremendously. Four months of safe, effective and proven incineration will eliminate almost half of the PCBs in New Bedford Harbor.

I appreciate the concern about these issues and hope that all interested parties will continue to monitor the cleanup of New Bedford Harbor. If you need any further assistance please contact me, or Al Frezza of the Office of Government Relations at (617-565-3162).

Sincerely,



Julie Belaga
Regional Administrator

cc: Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Senator John F. Kerry
Congressman Gerry Studds
Congressman Barney Frank
Councillor George Rogers
Paul Craffey, MA DEP
Liz Bettencourt, City of New Bedford
Pat Fowle, Town of Fairhaven
Board of Selectmen, Acushnet
David Hammond, Hands Across the River